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HOUR OF POWER FROM JUNE 27TH, 2010

I Am Weak, But He is Strong! (Sheila Schuller Coleman)

OPENING SENTENCE - RHS

RHS: This is the day that God has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

PROGRAM OPENING/TRUMPET FANFARE/V.O.

VO: Today on the Hour of Power: Mike Berenstain's parents created the incredible Berenstain Bears children's books, with over two hundred sixty million copies in print. Today, Mike shares with us these children's treasures as well as his faith.

MB: And they sent it off to an editor they know about named Theodore Seuss Geisel, aka Dr. Seuss who was an editor as well as an author, and he loved the characters in the book.

VO: Also today, child soloist Natalie Leonard.

NL: Lord of all to thee we raise..

VO: Then stay tuned as Sheila Schuller Coleman will help you turn your defeats into victory with God's help.

SSC: Acknowledge your powerlessness and acknowledge God's strength.

VO: If you need a lift today, you've tuned to the right program. Join us today for the best hour on television, the Hour of Power from the Crystal Cathedral.

HYMN - "Joyful, Joyful.."

Joyful, joyful, we adore You, God of glory, Lord of love; Hearts unfold like flowers before You, opening to the sun above. Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; Drive the dark of doubt away; Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day. Amen! Amen! Amen!

GOOD MORNING/INVOCATION

RHS: This is the day that God has made; we are rejoicing and we are glad in it. Amen.

SSC: Amen, turn around and shake hands with somebody and say God loves you and so do I.

RHS: God loves you and so do I, darling.

SSC: So let us open with a word of prayer. Lord Jesus Christ, here we are Your children: fathers, mothers and children all how we love You and we look to You, our Heavenly Father. Be with us today. Show us how we can be strong in You. Amen.

RHS: Amen.

HYMN - "Now is the Time for Faith/He is Able"

Now is the time for faith God's love flows fresh and true. O Lord of all our nights and days we give ourselves to You. Our fervent gift receive, and fit us to fulfill through all our years, in joy and tears our Heav'nly Father's will.

Teach us where'er we live to act as in Your sight and do what You would have us do with radiant delight. Not choosing what is great nor spurning what is small O lead us to Your noble work and glorify us all.

BETH: And you know as we ask God to lead us to His work, He will accomplish His purpose for each one of us. Will you sing “He is Able.”

He is able, more than able to accomplish what concerns me today. He is able, more than able to handle anything that comes my way. He is able, more than able to do much more than I could ever dream. He is able, more than able to make me what He wants me to be.

He is able, more than able to do much more than I could ever dream. He is able, more than able to make me what He wants me to be. He is able.

SCRIPTURE – Psalm 100 - RHS

RHS: You may be seated. The scripture: one of the favorite Psalms in the Old Testament, a Psalm written by David, Psalm 100. This young man who was raised as a shepherd became one of the great believers and from his heart he became a poet and his poetry lives on. We call them Psalms. They’re meant to be sung. This morning I read Psalm 100.

Shout for joy to the Lord all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before Him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us and we are His. We are His people, the sheep of His pasture. And the next verse we inscribed in metal at the front gate of this property. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him. I have people who say I have nothing to give. Give thanks to Him. And praise His name for the Lord is good and His love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations. Repeat; His faithfulness continues through all generations.

Well over two thousand years after this shepherd boy wrote this poem, we read it today here in the United States of America. This is the word of the Lord.

ANTHEM - "Foundation"

How firm a foundation, O saints of the Lord is laid for your faith in His excellent Word. What more can He say than to you He has said to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled.

Fear not, I am with you O be not dismayed for I am your God and will still give you aid. I'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand upheld by My righteous, all powerful hand.

When through fiery trials your pathway shall lie. My grace, all sufficient, shall be your supply. The flame shall not hurt you I only design your load to make light and your gold to refine.

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose; I will not, I will not desert to its foes. That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake I'll never, no never, no never forsake. Alleluia, Alleluia, Amen, Amen.

SSC THANK YOU TO CATHEDRAL CHOIR

SSC: Thank you, thank you choir.

INTERVIEW – MIKE BERENSTAIN

SSC: SHEILA SCHULLER COLEMAN MB: MIKE BERENSTAIN

SSC: Well as a mother and as an educator one of my favorite series of books were the Berenstain Bears books. I loved reading them to my kids. They were so much fun. They were wholesome and they were cute. And do you know that the Berenstain Bears books, and I know you all, if I took a show of hands, all of you would say you have read or owned at least one Berenstain Bear books because there are over three hundred books that have been written and published, two hundred currently in print, two hundred and sixty million copies have been sold. Wow. And here today is the son of the creator's, Jan and Stan Berenstain. He also works and is one of the authors and illustrators, Mike Berenstain. Mike, welcome.

MB: Thank you.

SSC: So good to meet you.

MB: Thank you very much Sheila. Great to be here.

SSC: So you grew up as a Berenstain Bear boy.

MB: Well I have an older brother so if I'm the younger, I must be sister bear.

SSC: Oh no, no but you grew up and this family grew up with it. Tell us how your parents first conceived the concept.

MB: Well they started out as magazine cartoonists doing cartoons for magazines like McCall's about a family of people. And my brother and I were growing up and we loved funny children's books, especially I think we liked Dr. Seuss a lot. I liked all his jokes and funny words. And my parents thought well we're good at doing funny cartoons about children maybe we could do funny books for children. So they came up with an idea for a book about a family of bears, called it The Big Honey Hunt and they sent it off to an editor they knew about named Theodore Seuss Geisel, who aka Dr. Seuss who was an editor as well as an author. And he loved the characters in the book and it got published in 1962 as the first one and the rest is history.

SSC: Oh and wonderful history it is. Now tell us, introduce the characters to us.

MB: Well of course first there's Papa Bear who is kind of a bear for all seasons I think of him. He's very positive, very enthusiastic. In fact he can be a little over enthusiastic, a little accident prone at times. He let's his enthusiasm..

SSC: He sounds kind of like somebody I know.

MB: ..well he sounds a lot like me and also my dad was like that. And we think that sometimes it even leads him to a little bit over bearing..

SSC: Oh.

MB: ..if you don't mind a bad joke. And then of course there's Mama Bear who is the emotional anchor of the family because she is very calm and sensible and has a lot of bear wisdom. She's a sucker for polka dots. Although sometimes she's not so calm and sensible. In a few books she kind of loses it when the bear cubs get particularly naughty.

Then there's Brother Bear and they bear with their parents, as we say. And Brother Bear is a very upbeat, positive, energetic young cub. He loves sports. He's into any kind of sport everything from soccer to roller-blading. But he also loves hobbies, more old-fashioned hobbies, the kind I liked when I was a kid like model airplanes.

And then there's Sister Bear who as the younger sibling has had to be a little feisty because she has to establish her place in the family. She's very much in favor of the color pink, as you might see from her outfit that she always wears. And she also loves sports, she excels at baseball but she loves truly girly things too, like her collection of bearbie dolls, as well.

SSC: So cute, so cute bearbie dolls. What I love about it is that throughout all three hundred books, the bears, the characters stay constant. They do not change and shift and that's not easy to do.

MB: No well it's something that my parents established early on. They really based the characters somewhat on themselves and my own family growing up. Papa and Mama Bear, those characters are very much like my own parents. They always tell you to write about what you know and that's what they did and it's been something we've kept up ever since and of course we know that family very well by now.

SSC: Was it your dream to be part of the Berenstain Bear books when you grew up or how did that happen?

MB: No, no I went to art school, the same art school my parents went to. I wanted to be an artist of some kind. And when I got out of art school I started as a freelance children's illustrator and author just doing all kinds of children's work. I was kind of a utility infielder in juvenile publishing. But it was very good training for me. I learned to be adaptable in all kinds of things. And that was in the mid-seventies. By the mid-eighties the Berenstain Bears were going through a huge surge in popularity. They had gotten on TV and many, many books were being done and my mom and dad were doing all of it themselves and they just couldn't do it all. So they would sometimes ask me to say help them finish a book and then I loved doing it because I grew up with the characters and it just grew from there and it gradually took over my life so I've been doing it every since.

SSC: And you have some new books coming out now. And they're Hurry to Help, Learn to Share, Do Their Best and then we have another one that Kristy Cavinder's going to read for us down below with the children, Discover God's Creation. These are a different form, a different venture for Berenstain Bears, talk about that.

MB: Well they're faith subject books, faith books. They open up a whole new area of subject matter for us to deal with everything from going to Sunday school, to saying your prayers, the golden rule, loving your neighbors. We're doing many, many different titles of these basic kind of religious subjects and they've gotten a wonderful response. Everybody seems to like them a lot.

SSC: And were did you get your faith from?

MB: Well I found God, became a Christian as an adult and that was a great gift to me that I was immensely grateful for and I felt I wanted to express that in my work, you know. We're told in the parable to use our talents..

SSC: Right

MB: ..and I tried to do that working on the Berenstain Bear books. My parents were very supportive of the concept. It was before my dad passed away, but we developed the idea together and my mom and I continue to do them.

SSC: Well they are a real gift to us, Mike. I can't even thank you enough as a parent, as an educator you make our job so much easier and give us a vehicle and a tool for teaching our children about God.

MB: Well that's what we're trying to do. We hope it's successful.

SSC: So thank you. May God continue to use you. We need you.

MB: Thank you, than you. Thank you for having me here.

SSC: My pleasure, my pleasure.

MB: Thanks a lot.

SSC: Thank you, Mike. God bless you. Give him a real warm round of applause.

READING – KRISTY CAVINDER

SSC: And now we want to invite children; if there are children here today to come down because Kristy Cavinder, Miss Kristy, wave your hand Miss Kristy, she's going to read you the story, Discover God's Creation. And while you are making your way down, Kristy tell us what you normally do on Sunday.

KC: Well I am dressed up for Kid Power Plant, which is our Sunday morning, Sunday school curriculum in my power vest and my tool belt. And every Sunday morning in the Family Life Center, we have our children's ministry program and there's a few things about this program that make it really unique and incredibly impactful.

First of all it's very interactive. The kids get to come in they do experiments and crafts, they participate in fusion time where they watch skits and they get to learn worship songs and then they also get to have a discussion with their teachers. And the second thing I love about the program and why it's so impactful is that through the course of three years they will go through the entire bible. So our hope is that they'll start out as a preschooler like one of these little guys and then they will go through the bible three times before they enter the sixth grade.

So this morning come on up. We are going to read a story. How many of you know the Berenstain Bears? Yes? And have you read about the Berenstain Bears? This morning we're going to read Discover God's Creation. If you guys all want to turn around so you can see the book. Can you all see? Discover God's Creation.

Said Mama Bear "it seems to me you cubs watch much too much TV." "Don't turn it off. It isn't fair. Don't turn it off, please Mama Bear."

"Watching all that TV slush will surely turn your brains to mush. I will not argue, you have no vote. I will keep the TV remote."

"I beg you Ma on bended knee don't take away our TV." But Ma was firm. Ma knew her mind "no more TV of any kind. There's so much more to do and see. God gave you eyes for more than TV." The cubs were stunned the cubs were shocked. Those TV watching bears were rocked.

Then Brother had a bright idea, "look out the window Sister Bear I see another world out there." It was bear country, God's creation. It was lovelier than any old TV station. They opened up the door a crack. Now there was no turning back. When those TV bears stepped outside, those TV eyes opened wide. There were such amazing things to see the cubs forgot that old TV. There was stuff called grass, things called trees and flying things called birds and bees. How did God think up all these?

And way, way, away up high, a big blue thing called the sky. The cubs loved all that God had done and knew they were in for much more fun. There were other cubs to run and play with and when they got tired to sit and stay with. There were playground things to climb and slide on and other things to climb and ride on. There was a thing called weather, sometimes it rained. One day it even hurrican'd. But then that thing called the sun came out and spread its warmth and light about. Said Brother Bear, "who needs TV?" Said Sister Bear, "TV? Not me."

"God's creation, we have found, has a better picture and better sound. And worlds of wonder all around. Thanks Lord for this world we've found. That thing up there called the moon means that we should go home soon."

But when the cubs got home, what did they see? Their Papa looking at TV. Maybe Papa didn't know God's creation was better than any old show. "Papa, too much of that TV slush will surely turn your brain to mush. Come outside and you will see God's creation is much better than any old TV."

Did you like that story? Yeah, you liked the story? Will you all pray with me? Let's bow our heads and close our eyes and fold our hands and you can repeat after me. Dear God, thank You for this day. Thank You for Your beautiful creation and thank You for loving me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

SOLO – NATALIE LEONARD – "For the Beauty of the Earth"

For the beauty of the earth, for the beauty of the skies. For the love which from our birth over and around us lies, over and around us lies. Lord of all, to Thee we raise this our joyful hymn of praise.

For the beauty of each hour; Of the day and of the night. Hill and vale and tree and flower, sun and moon and stars of light, sun and moon and stars of light. Lord of all, to Thee we raise this our joyful hymn of praise.

For the joy of human love; Brother, sister, parent, child. Friends on earth and friends above for all gentle thoughts and mild, for all gentle thoughts and mild. Lord of all, to Thee we raise this our joyful hymn of praise.

For each perfect gift of Thine to our race so freely given. Graces human and divine flow'rs of earth and buds of heav'n, flow'rs of earth and buds of heav'n. Lord of all, to Thee we raise, this our joyful hymn of praise. This our joyful hymn of praise.

RHS THANK YOU TO NATALIE LEONARD

RHS: Natalie, thank you. Did you have a grandfather named Lynn?

NL: I did.

RHS: Was that your grandpa?

NL: Yes, my great grandfather.

RHS: Great grandfather? He was a great warrior in the Second World War and he was a front man. Got shot up badly and lost the handsome face. And wanted faith but didn't want to go to church. He was ashamed of his face. And I met him and we brought him to the drive-in church and there he found the Lord. Lived a beautiful life; a great American hero. And you can be proud of him. Glad to meet his great grand daughter? Wonderful. Thank you, Natalie.

NL: Thank you.

MESSAGE/PRAYER – SHEILA SCHULLER COLEMAN

"I Am Weak, But He is Strong!"

SSC: Today, I am continuing our message series HA, Hallelujah Anyway! And I'm preaching from my book, my brand new book called Mommy Power; Discovering your Mommy Strength. And the principles found in the book can be applicable to all of us as you will hear, no matter who you are in life, where you are as a mother, a father or none of the above. But I am so indebted to my parents and I think all of us are.

And my parents, they modeled so many wonderful traditions that my husband and I adopted. And one of my favorite traditions is date night. As we were growing up, we saw mom and dad every Monday night they would go off for date night. They would have dinner and a walk along the beach, but they had the time just the two of them away from us five kids. And I thought that's a great way, it's a wonderful idea. And so when my husband and I got married we decided we were going to have date night as well. And especially as those four boys came in rapid succession, I got to the point where I was living for date night. One meal a week where I could sit and not have to jump up with spilled milk or navigate the fight over one strand of spaghetti more than the other. And you all know what that's like. And it was just like meal times were not very restful in a home when you're a mom.

But date night, those were fun. I could sit and I could have cinnamon coffee, that was my favorite back then, and just sit there and look into my husband's eyes and

talk without feeling like I had to jump up and serve or do anything. I got to be served for a change. And my husband loved date night just as much as I did. Now we were blessed to have family members who would baby-sit for free and they loved it. It gave them a chance to be with their grandsons or their nephews because some of them were aunts and uncles as well. And mother and father did their fair share of babysitting and it was wonderful memories for our boys.

But Nicholas, the youngest of the four, he was sick a lot as a little kid and so one time when mom and dad came over to baby-sit before we left I said to mom, I said "now mom, there's some medicine for Nick up on top of the fridge." Everything that I didn't want the boys to get a hold of went on top of the fridge. And so I said, "Be sure he gets his medicine before he goes to bed" and then Jim and I left. Had a wonderful night, a wonderful walk along the beach, came back home, walked in the back door and dad heard us come in and he said "Uh-oh they're home, Arvella. Are you going to tell them or shall I?" "Well what is it that we need to know, dad?"

And mom said, "Sh, sh, Bob I said don't tell them." I said, "well now you've got to."

Dad said, "Well she just screamed, she screamed and screamed." And I'm beginning to wonder what in the world happened. And I looked at mom and she goes "Sheila I'm so sorry. You know you asked me to make sure Nick got his medicine before he went to bed?" And I said "yes." And I'm thinking to myself oh I guess she forgot to give him his medicine. That's not that big of a deal, but why would that make her scream?

And I said "so you forgot to give him his medicine?" "Well no, I remembered to give him his medicine," she said, "but I was worried that I may have given him a teaspoon and it was supposed to be a tablespoon or vice versa so I took down the bottle and I checked the label to make sure that I'd given him the right amount."

Dad said, "That's when she started screaming." She said, "Well, it said for Autumn Coleman." Autumn Coleman was our anorexic Irish setter. "You gave my baby dog medicine?"

"Well he spit and sputtered. I had a hard time getting it down him." "I bet."

"I didn't know what to do so I called the poison control center. The poison control center said 'well lady we've never had anybody call and tell us they gave their grandkid dog medicine before. We don't know what to tell you.'" So they said call the vet. So mom called the vet. The vet told her the same thing: never had anybody call and tell us we've given dog medicine to a child before. And the vet said "don't worry, it's just a really strong vitamin."

But mom was feeling very, very bad about it all and she went home and the next morning she called and she said "Sheila, I couldn't sleep. I worried about Nicholas all night long. How is he?" I said "Mom I went up and I checked on him and his hair is shiny, his nose is cold and he's barking orders at me but otherwise he's just fine." And that's a true story. Nobody could make that up.

But any rate, can we laugh anyway when things are tough and we have times of anxiety, can we laugh in the face of anxiety? Can we love in the face of antipathy? You know that's revulsion. Can we love the unlovable? Can we believe in the face of adversity? Can we forgive in the face of animosity? Well today I hope you will learn how to do these things.

You know, I love the book, the story by T.H. White, *Sword in the Stone*. You know the story - Disney has taken it and made it into a movie, little cartoons? And there was this sword, Excalibur, in the stone and the inscription said "Who so pulleth out this sword of the stone is right wise king born of England." So here's this sword in the stone and of course the knights, the strongest knights in all of the

land thought wow here's my chance to be king of England and they came and they traveled from far and abroad and they went over and they pulled on that sword, they pulled on that sword one after another after another and it did not budge at all. The strongest of them was not strong enough to pull that sword from the stone.

Well today many of us are feeling oppressed, we're feeling weary and I want to say to you victory can be yours and I want to put some weapons in your hand today - weapons to ensure victory no matter how fierce the opposition, no matter how strong the oppression that you are under. And the secret is this: stop trying to be strong. Stop trying to be strong. And actually the secret is to accept the fact that we are weak. We are weak. Stop trying to do it on your own power. Become less of a self-sufficient adult and more like a dependent child. Acknowledge your powerlessness and acknowledge God's strength. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." And the principles in my book, Mommy Power, the principles I learned as a young mother, the principles that I use today as a leader are very simple, they're six words: Love strong, believe strong and forgive strong. Love strong, believe strong and forgive strong. Can we learn how to do that? We cannot do it on our own strength. That's the secret.

So the first is to love strong. Have you seen the movie Shrek? You know that ogre, that really hideous ogre that comes from a book written by William Steig. And this is what the princess says to the monster Shrek: "Your nose is so hairy, oh let us not tarry, your look is so scary, I think we should marry." Well that's kind of strong love, don't you think? Loving the unlovable, loving those that nobody else could love. That's strong love. But how do we do that?

The movie The Blind Side, many of you have seen it. If you haven't, I highly recommend you do. And that's the movie that Sandra Bullock won her Academy Award for. She played the role of Leigh Ann Tuohy, a true story. Leigh Ann Tuohy, a wonderful Christian woman lived an affluent life with her family, her husband and her two children. Driving along on a stormy night they see a young man walking their way, and the rain is pelting him in the dark and in the cold. And she has her husband pull over and she gets out, she jumps out of the car and she says "what are you doing? Where are you going to sleep tonight?" "I don't know," he said, "I don't know." He was a big, big boy. Not attractive in appearance, not doing well in school, flunking absolutely everything. He was one of thirteen children, had no parents to speak of. He was somebody that society had overlooked. Somebody that nobody had loved until Leigh Ann Tuohy took him home with her. He slept for the first time in his own bed. She hired a tutor. She got him through school until Michael Oher became a champion NFL football player. Adopted; one of their family. That is strong love. That is a strong love that God says you and I are not capable of on our own, but He can give that strong love to you and I.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." I can love strong through Christ who strengthens me. My love is weak but His love, His love is strong.

Can you believe in the face of adversity? How are we going to believe strong, men and women? How can we do that?

I'll never forget it was 4 a.m. in the morning, I was a young mother with my little boys and the phone rang at 4 a.m. Now we all know what that's like when that phone rings in the middle of the night. Your heart stops and you know something is really wrong. And I went into the room adjacent to the bedroom with my husband to answer the phone and I heard mom's voice. She said "Sheila I have really bad news for you." Dad traveled all the time. We were always worried when he traveled will he make it home okay? We knew he was in Amsterdam on

his way to see the Pope and she said “Your father has had an accident. He’s in a coma and he’s undergoing brain surgery right at this very moment. We do not know what the prognosis will be. We do not know if he will live or die. We do not know if he does make it through surgery what his condition will be like.”

I felt like my whole world had come tumbling down and I began to sob. My husband came out to find out what was wrong and as I told him, we both knelt there and we prayed immediately for my father, my strong powerful father who now was lying on a surgical table halfway across the world.

Mom left immediately for Amsterdam and she would call and give us updates on how dad was doing. He made it through the surgery okay. We’re not sure; the blood had pooled on the speech side of his brain. And my father who made his living, not only his living, but his whole gift to the world was through his words and through talk and through speech. We didn’t know if he’d ever regain that. And then I heard his voice on the phone. Wow! I can’t even begin to tell you what that meant to me. My heart leaped with joy to hear dad say “hi Sheila” from Amsterdam.

A week had passed from his surgery, we thought he was doing better and then mom called and she said “Sheila his brain has started to bleed again. He has to go in for a second surgery. Can you come and stay with me?” Well I jumped on a plane and I flew to Amsterdam. I couldn’t wait to get there to be by my mother’s side, to be by my father’s side. I thought I can be a rock for my mom. I can be her strength and her shield. And then she took me straight to the hospital where I saw dad. And I had thought dad was doing much better based on what I had been hearing, but what I saw and what I encountered stunned me. His head had been shaved for the surgery. He didn’t look anything like my father. And he couldn’t talk, really, truly. He couldn’t put two words together. He would try to say “why am I here?” He couldn’t even do that. I had to help him and I thought what in the world? This is not my father and I was so shaken. I was so shaken by what I saw.

That evening we went back to our hotel room, mom and I, and I climbed in bed, my insides just quivering. And I saw my mom, I will never forget it, it’s etched in my mind a picture of this woman, my mom, kneeling at the side of her bed with her book, her prayer book, her Psalms, her bible reading one Psalm after another after another praying. I saw this tremendous woman of God and this strong, strong faith that she had, even not knowing what in the world was going to happen to her husband.

I waited till I thought she had fallen asleep later and I crept across the hall to where I knew there was a phone where I thought I could talk privately and I called long distance. I got a hold of my husband. I could hardly wait. As soon as he said “Sheila, hello?” and I started to cry. I said “Jim, Jim you can’t even believe it. This isn’t dad. I don’t know what’s going to happen. I came here and I’m so scared, I’m so scared” and he prayed with and he calmed me down and I blew my nose and wiped my face and went back and I tiptoed back and climbed back in bed thinking mom never heard. And then she said to me “Sheila, are you okay?” I thought great. I come all the way to Amsterdam to try and be strong for my mom and she was the one who was strong for me. Can you believe strong? Can you? I can’t. But I can believe strong only through Christ who strengthens me. My belief is weak, but His belief is strong.

Forgive strong: You know what do we do when people have hurt us deeply? What do we do? I get e-mails from people and they say ‘Sheila, you talked about forgiveness. I can’t forgive. Do you want me to forgive my husband, my ex. He beat me. He had affairs on me. You want me to forgive him?’ And I say to you ‘yes, but; do not say yes to victimization but say yes to forgiveness. Forgive him

not for his sake but for your sake. Yes forgive.' Forgive strong. How do we do that? How do we forgive when we've been so deeply, deeply hurt?

Years ago in the early days of our church, we had a woman who joined our church. We called her Mom Shug and Grandma Shug because all of our extended family lived back in Iowa and Grandma Shug; Bernice was her name, lost her one and only son in World War II to a kamikaze pilot. And she carried that bitterness with her for her whole life. But my dad's name was Bob and she fell in love with our family and she said 'will you guys be my new family since I lost my family in World War II' and we said yes. And we were thrilled to have Mom Shug and Grandma Shug come over after school and make us poppy seed rolls and she was really, truly part of the family. And then one day dad decided to interview a kamikaze pilot who'd given his life to Jesus. At the last minute his mission had been aborted and as a result he survived World War II and he gave his life to Jesus Christ and his life was truly redeemed in all ways possible and he was the interview guest.

And Grandma Shug came to dad and she said to him "Bob, I hope you won't mind. I'm not going to be able to be at church this Sunday. I just don't think I can sit there and look and listen to a man who is very much like the man who took my son's life. Surely you can understand that." And dad said "I do, I do Mom, I do understand." Well imagine dad's surprise at the end of the message when he and the pilot, who gave a stirring testimony, and they were walking down the aisle together and all of a sudden out of the back row stood up Mom Shug. She moved to the middle of the aisle and blocked their way from leaving and dad was wondering what is she going to say. And as they got closer and as they got closer suddenly she threw out her arms and she wrapped them around my father and she wrapped them around the pilot and she said "can you forgive me for thinking ill of you? I forgive you for what you've done because Jesus forgave you and Jesus forgave me." Men and women, that is strong forgiveness. That's forgiving strong. Wow. What would happen to our world if we all were able to love strong, believe strong and forgive strong? You and I don't have the strength to do it but God can and will give that to you. Let's ask Him to do that right now.

Lord God Almighty, we sit here as Your children, weak children, dependent children, but we have a strong, strong God, a powerful loving Father and now, oh God, I just pray that You will put strong love in the hearts of Your children today. Put a strong faith in their hearts. Help them to forgive strong, oh Lord, for Your sake. Thank You Jesus for loving us so very, very much. We are weak, but You are strong. Amen.

ANTHEM - "I Walk with God"

I walk with God from this day on. His loving hand will lead me on. I pray to Him this humble plea: Help me, Lord, come closer to Me. I walk with God all day, all night. Why should I fear while He's on my side? His love will stay forever, and He'll forsake me never. He will not fail me. I'm weak, but my Lord is strong! He watches over me all day long.

I walk with God, He takes my hand. I talk to God, He understands. Hears ev'ry word I say to Him, and He knows what's in my heart as I pray: Lord, guide my steps and lead me on. And I'll never walk alone, since I walk with God. I walk with God from this day on!

BENEDICTION - RHS

RHS: Thank you Sheila for that great message. Thank you all for coming and you are part of thousands of people at all of the services here today and I know you're carrying something with you and that is the power of a mother can even be in the power of a father. You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world. I'm looking at the best people on planet earth. You came to church and given your heart to Jesus Christ. You are believers. And Christ is counting on you and so may God go with you and give you power when you are confronted. May God go with you who can give you peace in your conflict. May God go with you who can give you a look in the mirror that's different. The eyes look like they've been to church Sunday. Peace. Amen.

HYMN - "When Trials Come"

When trials come no longer fear for in the pain our God draws near to fire a faith worth more than gold and there His faithfulness is told, and there His faithfulness is told.

I turn to wisdom not my own for every battle You have known. My confidence will rest in You; Your love endures Your ways are good, Your love endures Your ways are good.

One day all things will be made new; I'll see the hope You called me to and in Your kingdom paved with gold I'll praise Your faithfulness of old, I'll praise Your faithfulness of old.